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SUBJECT: NINEWA: TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT MAY WORK IN LIMITED AREAS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3198

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3134

[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 1849

Classified By: Ninewa Deputy PRT Leader Jerome Sebastyn: 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: In the wake of Anbar-based anti-insurgency leader Sattar al-Rishawi's assassination on September 13, Sattar's brother and successor Ahmad al-Rishawi has stressed his dedication to confronting Sunni extremists and foreign fighters both in Anbar Province and beyond, particularly in neighboring Ninewa Province (ref A). Simultaneously, news reports have cited efforts by the Prime Minister's office to launch its own "tribal engagement" in Ninewa through Shammar tribal figure Fawaz al Jarba, who has long-standing ties with Shia political parties and carries little stature among Ninewa's tribes. It should not be assumed that Ninewa's tribes would be able to cleanse the province of AQI or entrenched national resistance groups. Ironically, the effort to use these tribes to provide security throughout the province could weaken the increasingly successful provincial government. End Summary.

No Evidence of Mosul Office of Anbar Awakening

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Ahmad al-Rishawi claimed that the Anbar movement Sahawa al-Iraq, or Awakening Council of Iraq (SAI), opened a Mosul office on September 16 (ref A). However, Ninewa Governor Duraid Kashmoula and leaders of the al Jarba branch of the Shammar tribe said they knew nothing about that office or any other tribal awakening movement in Ninewa. (Note: The al Jarba tribe is a branch of the Shammar tribe, which is the largest and most powerful in Ninewa. End note.)

Fawaz al Jarba is Overrated

[1](#)3. (S/NF) News reports also suggest that Fawaz al Jarba, a minor sheikh in the al Jarba tribe, is pursuing a Ninewa Awakening Council. The PRT has found no evidence that al Jarba's proposed council is related to a Mosul office of the Anbar council mentioned by Ahmad al-Rishawi. News reports cited Fawaz al Jarba's desire to cooperate with the Iraqi Army instead of Coalition Forces (CF), though Fawaz's cousin and leader of a Ninewa elections NGO, Abdulaziz al Jarba, said that Fawaz would be willing to explore CF cooperation.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) Abdulaziz pointed out that Fawaz does not command nearly as much tribal weight and popular support as other Shammar sheikhs, such as Khalid Sfooq al Faisal or Abdulla

Hameed al Ajeel al Yawer. Both Provincial Council member Ibrahim Merer, a member of the Lehaibi tribe and a former Iraqi Army general, and provincial Iraqi Islamic Party leader Mohamed Shakir echoed Abdulaziz's assessment of Fawaz al Jarba's low province-wide support.

¶5. (S/NF) Amid the media clamor over a Ninewa awakening, 4/1 Brigade Combat Team Commander has met with several major Shammar sheikhs whose tribal power provides them influence over western Ninewa Province. Fawaz al Jarba has not attended those meetings. The major Shammar sheikhs, who are Sunni Arab, said they would prefer that any cooperation on fighting terrorists be through CF rather than the Iraqi Army, which they see as dominated by Kurds and Kurdish expansionist interests.

Comment: Ninewa is Different, and Working

¶6. (S/NF) Ninewa differs from Anbar in several ways that are significant for potential tribal engagement and conventional politics. First, northern Iraqi tribal leaders generally have much less influence over their populations than do their southern counterparts, especially in Ninewa's largely literate and urbanized society. Iraqi Commander of Joint Forces Babakir argued as much to the Prime Minister earlier this month (ref B). Only in the western and southern parts of Ninewa - coinciding with the areas the 4/1 BCT is already engaging - does sheikhs' influence match that of their Anbari neighbors. Second, Ninewa is much more ethnically and religiously heterogeneous than Anbar. Of the major groups in Ninewa (Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Yezidis, Turkoman and Shabak), only the Arabs - particularly those living in the sparsely populated west and south - fall into a strong tribal

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structure. Competition over land and provincial power among these groups - especially in the run-up to provincial elections and the Article 140 process - could lead to more ethnically based violence and political jockeying.

¶7. (S/NF) Most importantly, Ninewa already has stable, functioning provincial and district government institutions, with the province's groups directing their energies toward political engagement rather than armed militias. Due to the effectiveness of provincial institutions, Sunni Arab leaders press for further participation in the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police and new provincial elections as soon as possible to rectify the Kurdish over-representation that resulted from the Arabs' 2005 elections boycott (ref C). Conversely, extensive empowerment of tribal sheikhs has the potential to further draw rural Sunni Arabs away from the political process, drive a wedge between the province's antagonistic Arab and Kurdish factions and signal an acceptance of armed militias from any faction. Therefore, the BCT and the PRT will continue tribal engagement in those limited areas of Ninewa with strong sheikh influence, coupled with clear support for both the political process in general and specifically for Sunni political engagement through new provincial elections.

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